



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Hon. Gordon H. Smith

Member - Helsinki Commission

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this hearing today to discuss the options for governmental response to anti-Semitic incidents within the Member States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Helsinki Commission has made great strides in working with OSCE since the dramatic increase in anti-Semitic activity was noted by the Commission in the spring of 2002.

In April, our efforts culminated as fifty-five countries drafted the Berlin declaration. This pronouncement, tailored to address the growing concern over global anti-Semitism was a significant display of the willingness of the delegations to tackle even the most difficult topics. The Declaration states that, "international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism." This admonition echoes Lawrence Summers, president of Harvard University, who said in 2001, that in many cases anti-Israel rhetoric is "anti-Semitic in effect, if not in intent."

In light of these positive developments, I would like to thank Chairman Chris Smith for his successful leadership of this Commission, and his sustained commitment to the implementation of the Helsinki Final Accords. Additionally, Representatives Cardin and Hastings, as well as Mayor Koch and Secretary Powell played crucial roles in securing the achievements of the Berlin Conference.

I am also pleased to say that while the Berlin Conference was an important step in combating anti-Semitism, we are also in the process of applying the resolution to specific action in Congress. S. 2292, which I have co-sponsored, calls upon the State Department to include in its November report the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) study on anti-Semitic patterns in OSCE countries. Making this statistical public would lead to increased pressure on OSCE nations that have a poor track record of combating anti-Semitism.

S. 2292 has been approved by the Senate, and is now awaiting consideration in the House. I urge my colleagues to swiftly take this step towards eliminating anti-Semitism, and implementing the Helsinki Final Accords, as charged to this Commission.

Additionally, I would mention that my 1997 amendment, which is still in effect today, that limits foreign aid to the Russian Federation for its restrictions on religious freedom, could

serve as a model for pressuring OSCE countries to cooperate with the ODHIR report as well as with the Helsinki Accords in general.

The detrimental effects of anti-Semitism, and more generally any type of religious persecution and restriction on the freedom of conscience, lead to tyranny and societal decay. We must remain vigilant in the fight against these ills and work to protect basic human rights for the many that still suffer under the dark cloud of religious intolerance.